

At the end of last year, several environmental organizations in Serbia started looking for answers from the company Rio Tinto, about how the excavation of this ore will affect the environment in the vicinity of Loznica, in Western Serbia, where it is planned to open a Jadarite processing mine.

Environmental activists, the Coalition for Sustainable Mining and the Association “Let’s Defend Jadar and Radjevina”. “Earth Thrive” and “Eco-road Bijeljina”, in a statement from April 2021, as the main problems in the project “Jadar”, singled out the damage to the waters of the Drina basin, and that the planned mine is harmful to the local community. “If the mine opens, the only question is when the ecocide will happen and when we will get Drina water contaminated with heavy metals and sulfuric acids,” they said in a statement. Zvezdan Kalmar, from the Coalition for Sustainable Mining and the Association “Let’s Defend Jadar and Radjevina”, in January 2021, said that the idea of opening a lithium mine in Serbia was unacceptable.

“We believe that the [announced] lithium mine in Serbia, as such, is unnecessary, that is, that it is dangerous for the entire area around the Jadar River. In addition, this project was dangerous not only for that area, but also for the Drina River, the Sava River, and in the final instance, it would endanger Belgrade as well,” Kalmar told H1.

Kalmar then said that the planned project endangers the inhabitants of about 300 square kilometers, ie over 20 villages, several tens of thousands of people and twenty thousand farmers.

What does Rio Tinto say?

In the same interview for H1, Rio Tinto’s senior environmental adviser, Margareta Milosavljevic, denied the activists’ allegations of potential damage to the environment, and pointed out that this project is being implemented “in accordance with Serbian legislation, EU legislation, and Rio Tinto standards. ”

Rio Tinto actively got involved and launched a campaign to explain the Jadar project from its point of view, as soon as the first complaints were heard in public.

At a meeting with NGO representatives and environmental activists on Thursday (June 3rd), they announced they would invest more than \$ 100 million in environmental protection and close to \$ 40 million in a water treatment plant.

Rio Tint’s Chief Environmental Advisor, Margareta Milosavljević, stated that the issue of the environment is in the company’s focus: “For our company, the attitude towards the environment and climate change is of great importance and in accordance with this water management, the highest standards are approached. in all Rio Tinto operations, in order to

meet the sustainability goals to which we are committed. ”

What does the state say?

Minister of Mining and Energy Zorana Mihajlovic said on May 6 that the goal of the Government of Serbia is to develop sustainable mining and that the issue of environmental protection is a key issue for all decisions that will be made regarding mining projects, including the lithium deposit research project. around Loznica, ie the Jadar project.

On June 1, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic met with representatives of Rio Tinto, thanking the company for its readiness to discuss open issues, as well as for “commitment and understanding regarding the requirements for transparent work and meeting the most demanding conditions in the field of ecology,” he said. in the statement.

At a press conference on June 4, the President of Serbia said that, if necessary, the state would call a referendum on whether to start the exploitation of lithium.

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